

## **From Science to Stewardship: the application of forage fish habitat assessment data to the protection of shoreline resources in San Juan County, Washington.**

*Tina Whitman\*, Stephanie Buffum Field, Friends of the San Juans  
Jim Slocomb, SJC Marine Resources Committee*

Keywords: forage fish, San Juan County, shoreline protection

Comprehensive forage fish spawning habitat assessments were conducted in San Juan County (SJC) from June 2001 through December of 2003. County-wide eelgrass mapping and exploratory herring spawning surveys have also been completed. Since survey completion, the SJC forage fish project has transitioned from a research and education project to one focused on the application of results to improved shoreline protection in San Juan County. As the lead coordinator of the collaborative forage fish project, FRIENDS of the San Juans has employed a variety of methods to achieve shoreline protection including: 1. active participation in public planning processes (e.g.: critical areas ordinance updates and essential public facilities); 2. voluntary conservation incentives; 3. spatial modeling of protection priorities for forage fish habitat and 4. targeted outreach and education (e.g.: shoreline landowners, county staff and realtors). These strategies will be discussed, including initial successes and lessons learned. Results will provide insight for others finishing up forage fish surveys and working to protect nearshore marine habitat in Puget Sound.